Dublin & Glendalough Mothers' Union Newsletter

November 2026

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Celebrating 150 years of Mothers' Union



Founding members of Mothers' Union, 1876

Letter from the Diocesan President

Ada Lawson



Hello members, and friends.

I hope you all had a lovely warm summer, and you enjoyed it especially your garden, Ireland is a peaceful place to visit when we have warm weather.

I know we are in the winter months, shorter days, longer nights, but look what is still growing in my garden, a sunny dahlia (see photo). While in Durban at the Global Conference there was discussion on climate change so the dahlia still producing blooms is a sign of global warming.

For 2026 it has been a year of celebrations, what a milestone, 150 years of Mothers' Union Worldwide, a wonderful organisation to be member. In this issue there are reports of the various events that happened during 2026, please do share the report within your parish letting everyone know what Mothers' Union is good at, helping people who meet with adversity, promoting stable family life, and promoting fellowship of Christians united in prayer and especially how we celebrate.

Being at the Worldwide Global Conference in Durban at the end of September celebrating 150 years of Mothers' Union was a very humbling experience. We heard everything about how Mothers' Union helps women and families throughout the world through the various topics 'Families Under Pressure', 'The Crisis in our Homes' and 'The Church as an Agent of Justice'.

For 2027 will be another year of celebration as we celebrate the 140th birthday of Mothers' Union in Ireland. The main event planned by All Ireland in our dioceses is.

Sunday 7 February Annabella Hayes Day 140th Anniversary Service All Saints' Church, Raheny

The service will be at 11.00am followed by a Celebratory Lunch in Clontarf Castle Hotel at a cost €48. I look forward to seeing as many of Dublin & Glendalough members in attendance. There will be more details coming out over the next two months via email, so please be checking your emails.

The Trustee Board is planning little events within the dioceses e.g. Festival Service with a Tea Party. Branches can plan your own event in your parish celebrating 140 years of Mothers' Union, get your thinking hats on. I would love to attend your parties.

I wish you and your family and friends good health.

Take care

Afternoon Tea Party, May 16th

Dee Huddleson and Jessica Clarke



A wonderful party - Dublin and Glendalough Mothers' Union Afternoon Tea Party and Service held on Saturday 16th May to celebrate Mary Sumner and 150 years of Mothers' Union.

Mothers' Union members and friends gathered for our Tea Party in Castleknock Parish Hall, which was beautifully set out, with tables decorated with cloths and china from member's homes.

We were a very happy, colourful group, with old friends meeting up and Irish African members, some from Mothers' Union in Zimbabwe in uniform. We were delighted to have All Ireland President, Kay Clarke and her husband with us on the day, along with Archbishop Michael Jackson.

Diocesan President, Ada Lawson welcomed everyone and our Diocesan Chaplain Rev. Colin McConaghie led us in a joyful, meaningful service. The All-Ireland President read the lesson. Prayers, including the Mary Sumner prayer, were led by members. The Archbishop gave the blessing.

No one went hungry as an amazing array of food was provided and served by the Trustees and branch members from Castleknock. This included a mouth-watering selection of sandwiches, scones, cakes and pastries.



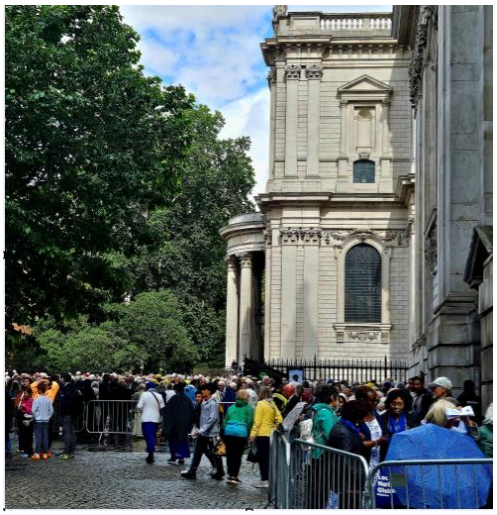
A special moment came when Di Weldon was presented with a certificate for 70 years membership in the Mothers' Union. Many of us also admitted to long service in Mothers' Union, but not quite as long as Di!!

The afternoon ended very happily with everyone enjoying their raffle prizes and the African ladies treating us to some beautiful songs. Many thanks to Castleknock Branch, the Trustees and everyone involved for a lovely afternoon.



150th Service of Thanksgiving for Mothers' Union, St. Paul's Cathedral, London

Lesley Anders



All around the cathedral, the saints and apostles look down as she sells her wares, Although you can't see it, you know they are smiling each time someone shows that he cares...." from Mary Poppins (Sherman/ Sherman 1964)

As we congregated around St. Paul's on the 10th June, there was no one 'Feeding the birds', and it was not Mary Poppins but another Mary - Mary Sumner and the organisation that she founded, Mothers' Union (MU) - that over 1,200 members and friends gathered in London's largest cathedral, through torrential downpours, to celebrate 150 years of an organisation focused on faith and family.



Efficiently we made our way inside the vast Cathedral and found our seats, all the while gazing at Wren's stunning dome and appreciating the splendour of this space. There was an anticipation for the upcoming service as we leafed through the substantial programme and, as at any MU gathering, large or small, a buzz of chatter among friends, old and new.



As the service began, the organ started up and the procession took its first steps and, oh!, those first notes sung by the inspired choir. "Lord, for the years, your love and kept and guided, urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way...."

The sound of so many voices in this unique choir was breathtaking- the words so utterly appropriate. We were warmly welcomed by the Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dame Sarah Mullally, Archbishop of Canterbury. Could Mary Sumner have imagined this scenario from the humble first gathering in her Rectory living room in Arlesford, Hampshire in 1876?? (1876 also being the year Alexander

Graham Bell made the first telephone call, Mark Twain published The Adventures of Tom Sawyers and the Settle- Carlisle railway opened to passenger traffic!)



In her address, Kathleen Snow, MU Worldwide President, quoting Psalm 107, pointed to the way the relationships around and with each other mould us. She emphasised the extraordinary power of communities, groups, and fellowship – the joy from moments we share and the offering of support and striving for common goals: these are the heart of what Mothers' Union stands for. Similarly, the Archbishop, in her sermon, referred to the compassionate action carried out by MU members across many social and economic barriers effecting families and within our communities. She likened these activities to being like salt, essential and adding flavour, distinction and goodness: like light - helping others find their way and adding colour and meaning: recognising dignity in all situations: listening and responding while being guided by the needs of individuals. Is Mothers' Union perhaps the "powerhouse of the Anglican world?" she asked.

As we waited in lines around St.Paul's to receive Eucharist, the words sung around the Cathedral rang out, "When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony...." It was an unforgettable moment for this pilgrim.



Perusing the timeline of action printed in our programmes, I am proud to be part of an organisation that has clearly championed the lives of women and their families for 150 years. In 1885 Mary Sumner quotes William Ross Wallace in her first public speech," The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world", grasping and highlighting the importance of the role of women in family life; in 1909 MU becomes Britain's largest voluntary organisation for women; in 1929 MU campaign to raise the minimum age of marriage (from 12 to 16!); in 1945, in a joint lobbying effort, the Family Allowances Act passes, payments to be made directly to Mothers' as opposed to men; in 1965 the launch of AFIA (Away From It All programme, providing holidays for families in need) ; in 2000 MU gains consultancy

status at the United Nations on poverty, gender equality and HIV/AIDS; in 2010, the launch of Bye Bye Childhood, calling on government and marketeers to value and protect children from exploitative marketing.

No wonder, as members from Dublin and Glendalough diocese posed for a photograph in front of the haunting and beautiful pre-Raphaelite Holman Hunt 1851 painting 'Light of the World', there is a pride that shines in their smiles. What next for MU?? Well, that is business for the following day at the Annual Gathering.

Fittingly, we departed that sacred space into a balmy June evening, the rain had passed, we admired the view of the City of London from the height of Ludgate Hill and listened to the peal of the ancient bells of St. Pauls, recharged and filled with hope and love.



The Mary Sumner Prayer

All this day, O Lord,
Let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;
and every life I touch,
do thou by thy spirit quicken,
whether through the words I speak, the prayer I breathe or the life I live.

"Though her words are simple and few,
Listen, listen, she's calling to you...."

The Day Zimbabwe MU came to Wicklow

Jessica Clarke



We are very fortunate in Wicklow and Killiskey Mothers' Union to have two members who are leading members of **Zimbabwe Mothers' Union in Ireland**; and last spring Melody Kamusoko and Sharon Mpofu approached our Rector, Rev. Jack Kinkead, for permission to bring a group from Zimbabwe Mothers' Union, together with other ladies, to Wicklow Parish Church on Saturday 11th July for **a Combined Inter - denomination Church service.**

Invitations were sent to local Mothers' Union Branches and to members from other churches. Wicklow Mothers' Union members, Allyson Minion and Jessica Clarke with parishioner Frances Shearer offered to assist with the organization and food preparation. Details were checked: number of toilets, power points for air fryers, and (of course) the urn… sandwiches were ordered, cakes were made and food to be cooked was purchased. And we prayed in the middle of a warm dry spell of weather that it wouldn't be too hot.



On the day more than 50 people arrived. Members from the Salvation Army, members of the Catholic and Methodist Churches came, all in different uniforms. Most of them arrived from different parts of Ireland including Rev Faith Sithole from Cavan. We also greeted one lady from Zurich and another from Brussels. We were delighted too that we had with us the Mothers' Union Diocesan President Ada Lawson, All Ireland Treasurer Rev Ken Rue, and Trustees Ann Walsh and Jean Denner with her husband Mervyn.

Later we were very happy to be joined by the Rev Alastair Doyle, the new All Ireland Chaplain, and also by members from Arklow and Greystones Branches.

The theme of the day was **Woman of Valour, Powerful in Prayer** as found in Proverbs 31 vs 10-31.

Melody opened the meeting and Allyson welcomed everyone on behalf of the Parish. The first speaker was Rev Ncube from the Methodist Church. He gave a powerful testimony both spiritual and practical, stressing the importance of women in the home.

Diocesan President Ada Lawson then asked some people from the different groups represented to come forward and tell us about their groups and their uniforms.

Allyson and Frances did an amazing job of cooking food and laying it on tables as lunchtime approached.

In the afternoon Minister Mai Kakopa spoke to the group, this was another powerful testimony.

All talks were interposed with songs and hymns and wonderful dancing.

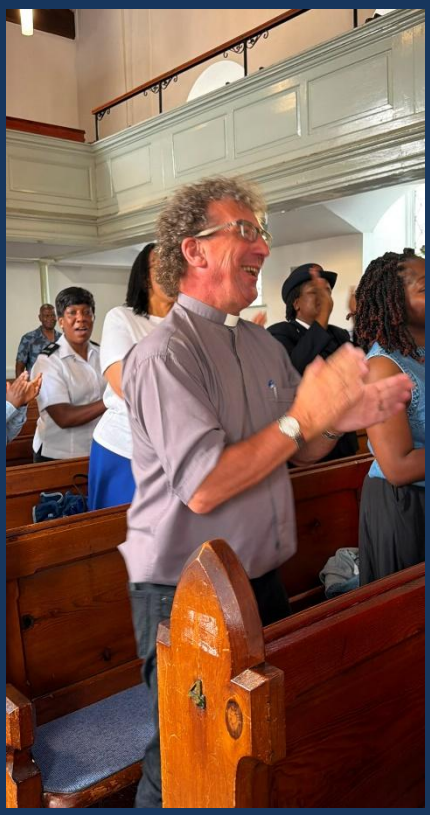


The event was altogether a very joyous celebration of belonging together in the family of Christ's church through the Mothers' Union.




GIRLS BRIGADE


WICKLOW
KILLISKEY



Mary Sumner Day – August 9th - All Ireland Service of Holy Communion for 150 years of Mothers' Union in Christ Church Cathedral.

Jean Denner



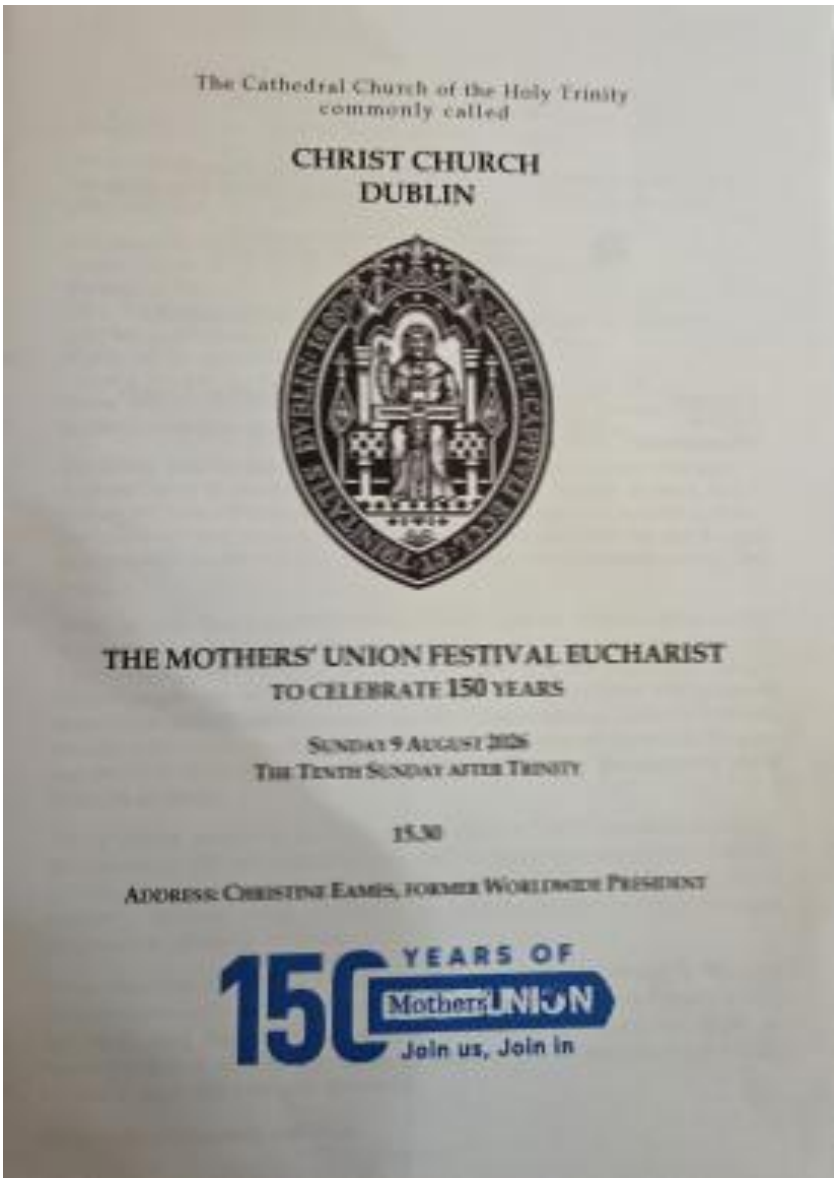
Members from all over Ireland gathered together in Christ Church Cathedral on Mary Sumner Day 9th August to Celebrate the 150 Year of Worldwide Mothers' Union. Before the service, as buses and cars brought members and friends together, there was lots of chat as friends met up.

As we arrived at the cathedral, we could listen to the choir made up of Mothers' Union members from all around the country practicing and they sounded fantastic.



The service of Eucharist was led by the Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough, the Most Rev. Dr. Michael Jackson; he greeted and welcomed everyone to Christ Church Cathedral and gave a special welcome to Kay Clarke, All Ireland President and Lady Eames, former Worldwide President of Mothers' Union. During the service the new All Ireland Chaplain, Rev. Alistair Doyle, Rector of Arklow, was commissioned by the Archbishop. The address was given by Lady Eames. She took as her the sentence from the Gospel "Love one another as I have loved you". She said that is so important to Mothers' Union as we show love for one another. Her address continued as she told us stories from around the world and around the corner of her experiences in Mothers' Union meeting members. She reminded us how the world now see women so different for 150 years ago when Mothers' Union was founded and how the world is so different now as we live in such a digital age.

The Boards from the Mothers' Union office recording the names of the Mothers' Union Past Presidents was presented to the Cathedral. Also dedicated was a preachers stole presented by Rev Arthur Barrett in Memory of Mrs Ann Barrett General President Ireland 1989-1995, for the use of the All-Ireland Chaplain of Mothers' Union.



Diocesan Festival Service, Taney 20th September

Amy Hourie



Rev Nigel Pierpoint, Rector of Taney, and the MU branch members were pleased to be asked to host the 2026 MU Diocesan Festival Service. The plans made in advance worked well. Thanks to the parish staff who left tables and chairs in place in the Sinnamon Hall post the regular Sunday a.m. service. This made life a lot easier for the MU members to have everything ready and in place ahead of the service. During the singing of the first hymn the Diocesan and branches banners were brought to the front of the church and presented to the Diocesan MU Chaplain Rev. Colin McConaghie and Rev. Nigel Pierpoint. The service continued with hymns and scripture reading, read by representatives from different branches and trustees.

The Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough, the Most Rev. Dr. Michael Jackson, commissioned the members of the Diocesan Trustees. The All-Ireland MU Chaplain Rev. Alister Doyle preached the sermon, speaking about the vision of Mary Sumner who set up MU 150 years ago. It was good to celebrate this occasion and be part of the various 150th gatherings held to date in 2026. Next year, in 2027, Ireland will celebrate the 140th anniversary of MU in Ireland and the vision of Annabel Hayes who started MU in Ireland in Raheny Parish in 1887. We in Ireland look forward to celebrating this event in February 2027.

The service concluded with the blessing and during the singing of the last hymn the banners were collected and brought to the back of the church. Photos were taken outside with the clergy and the banners and those who were commissioned.





The congregation then went to the Sinnamon Hall and enjoyed a chat and a cuppa. Ada Lawson addressed the group and thanked Rev. Nigel for the use of Taney, The Archbishop for his presence and the Chaplains Rev Alister Doyle All Ireland MU for preaching and Rev Colin Diocesan MU Chaplain who led the service. She thanked the members of Taney for organising the refreshments and to the those who came from branches throughout the Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough and brought contributions toward the tea. She wished all a safe journey home.



MU 150th Anniversary Global Gathering, Durban, South Africa.

Karen Nelson

The Mothers' Union Worldwide Gathering opened in Durban, South Africa on Wednesday 30 September, with worship, celebration and a warm welcome to members from across the global fellowship as 150 years of faith in action began a new chapter.



For delegates arriving from different countries, cultures and communities, the opening day was a chance to meet old friends, make new ones and experience the joy of being part of one worldwide family. From traditional songs and chants to line dancing during worship songs, the scale of the worldwide fellowship was clear.

There may be thousands of miles between members, but in Durban everyone was united by a shared faith, a shared calling and a shared sense of belonging. And, after 150 years, there was plenty to celebrate.

Day two of the Worldwide Gathering began with a question about the future: how do we ensure Mothers' Union flourishes for the next 150 years?

The answer, delegates heard, is not simply about attracting younger people. It is about creating a movement where younger generations can belong, contribute and lead, and where every generation can learn from one another.

The day opened with a conversation that offered an honest look at both the opportunities and challenges facing younger members. The stories shared highlighted the importance of being listened to and trusted, the way to help younger members is to 'walk alongside us and help us grow. It's not about older people walking and younger following. It's also not about the younger taking over. It's about walking together.'

Their message was clear: if Mothers' Union is to remain a truly intergenerational movement, creating space for younger people to contribute and lead needs to be part of its future.

Day 3 opened with more uplifting worship, singing and dancing. The bishop gave a powerful homily challenging us to look outward so we would have Mothers' Union for another 150 years.

The first keynote speaker was The Rt Revd Dr Vicentia Kgabe. Bishop of Pretoria who spoke about The Church as an Agent of Justice - from Charity to Transformation. The main message was injustice to women and widows.

Next was a family panel discussion — The Crisis in Our Homes - Domestic Abuse, Poverty, Addiction and the Hidden Suffering inside family life, the moderator for this group was June Butler. We had views from Africa, Wales, Canada & West Indies, each area had different perspectives on the topic.

The 4th Family Panel discussed — Families Under Pressure, Migration, Displacement, Climate Change & the Fragmentation of Family Life across the globe.

Delegates were also challenged to consider what comes next. How can we continue to live out our faith when returning home?

Kathleen Snow WWP said. 'We are a movement not just an organisation. We are continuously evolving, speaking different languages and wearing different dress, but we are one in the Lord.'

Day 4 was the close of the Gathering with a joyful Eucharist celebrated by The Archbishop of Canterbury.





Mothers' Union Advent Reflections

Rev. Colin McConaghie, Diocesan Mothers' Union Chaplain

Life is full of so many times and seasons that often we feel we are drifting so quickly between each major life event that we don't have a chance to take it in. It seems like only yesterday we were enjoying a long balmy summer with late evenings spent chatting outdoors, now it's dark by 5 o'clock and we seem to be flying into Christmas faster than the speed of light… but then comes Advent.

Advent is a season that only seems relative in the church world and even then, it becomes largely consumed by Christmas Carol Services, Fairs and more. I wonder if Advent came up in one of our television quiz shows how many would get the right answer as to when it takes place let alone what it is for.

Advent comes at arguably the busiest time of the year, yet Advent is a season that calls us to slow down to pause and to wait. Slow down, pause and wait aren't words we associate with early December as we queue in crowded shops and desperately search our diaries for an available date when family or friends might actually be all available to be in the same place. However, Advent calls us to do exactly those things that seem so out of step with this busy time of year. The question might be for each of us are we willing or able to make the time to slow down, pause and wait?

Three words have been resonating in my head as I think of Advent this year; "Waiting, Watching and Wondering."

The Old Testament is a journey of God's people waiting to enter the promised land and then waiting for the promised Messiah. When the Messiah arrived on that very first Christmas despite all of that waiting only a few people, lowly shepherds and obscure wise travellers, seemed to be watching in anticipation. Since that first Christmas the whole of humanity just like John the Baptist have been wondering "Is Jesus truly the one." That question leaves us a lot to ponder on in our lives "is Jesus the one?" – the one who has changed our lives, the one who walks with us, and we walk with day by day, the one who is centre to all we do?

This December as we're surrounded by a seemingly unstoppable sense of busyness maybe we need to take a little time out to hit the pause button to "Wait, Watch and Wonder" because when we do so we allow space in the midst of the dark nights for the light of the world to come into our lives. For even amid the seemingly endless to do lists Immanuel, God is with us. When we wait for him in stillness, when we watch what he is doing in us and around and when we wonder at how much he loves us Advent truly becomes not only meaningful but life changing.

I pray that all our members have a meaningful Advent, a hope filled Christmas and a peaceful New Year. We look forward to celebrating 140 years of Mothers' Union in Ireland in 2027 and I look forward to journeying with you as your Chaplain.

God Bless

Up-coming Dates for your Diary:

Two All-Ireland events planned for the celebration of the 140 years of Mothers' Union in Ireland in <u>2027</u>

7th February: Annabella Hayes Day. 140th Anniversary Service in Raheny church (@11am) followed by lunch in Clontarf Castle.

5th – 7th November: Women's Getaway, Armagh City Hotel. On the Sunday 7th there will be a Service of Choral Eucharist in St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh @11am.

Further details will follow closer to the time, so keep an eye on your emails.